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Eight Probe Targets Have Little in

By Alan Ehrenhalt,
Washington Star Staff Writer

Operation Abscam has implicated a diverse group of legislators, including House and Senate committee chairmen, a Democratic member of the House ethics committee, and a fiercely conservative Republican. Some have been involved in past investigations; others have served a quarter-century in Congress without hint of scandal.

Profiles of the eight:

Sen. Harrison A. Williams, D-N.J.

More than any other U.S. senator, Harrison (Pete) Williams has emerged in the past decade as organized labor's indispensable man on Capitol Hill.

Ten years ago, a series of defeats and retirements made Williams the heir apparent to the chairmanship of the Labor and Public Welfare Committee. Unions helped pull him through an uphill re-election campaign that year, and helped again, in less dire circumstances, when he was re-elected to his fourth term in 1976.

During his first two Senate terms, Williams was known for his work on mass transit issues, his opposition to the Vietnam War, and for a stormy personal life. He was censured by the New Jersey NAACP in 1968 for appearing drunk at a civil rights breakfast. In the 1970 campaign, Williams admitted having a drinking problem, said he had conquered it, and managed to avoid serious criticism.

As chairman of Labor and Public Welfare (now the Human Resources Committee), Williams has been instrumental in passage of massive pension reform, health bills and other social welfare legislation.

He is also chairman of a Banking subcommittee with control over the securities industry, which helped him in his 1976 campaign; financial institutions provided almost as much money for him in contributions that year as did organized labor.

Rep. Frank Thompson Jr., D-N.J.

Witty, irreverent and profane, Frank Thompson has prided himself on the reputation he has earned as a reformer in his 13 House terms.

He supported revision of labor laws early in his career and narrowly escaped serious injury when thugs threw acid at him outside the Capitol in 1958. He fought closed House procedures and autocratic committee chairmen in the 1960s, and challenged Wayne Hays for control of the important House Administration Committee in 1975.

When Hays was finally forced out in 1976, Thompson took over the committee and reorganized the loose personal expense system that allowed members to pocket large sums of cash without reporting them.

Thompson has devoted much of his time to federal support for the arts, and to creation of the National Endowment for the Arts. But in recent years, most of his legislative work has been with labor — as a loyalist, not a critic.

It was Thompson who led the fights in 1976 for common site picketing legislation and in 1977 for labor law revision. "I guess I'm generally thought of as the one around here who carries the load for labor," he said. "And I guess I do."

Rep. John M. Murphy, D-N.Y.

An honors graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, John Murphy is viewed in the House as a man who knows how to lead. He has used the seemingly innocuous Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee to gain legislative leverage over a variety of policy areas. And he was the principal power broker in the recent passage of legislation implementing President Carter's Panama Canal treaties. But he has never managed to break free of suspicion about his methods and his involvements.

A close ally of the maritime industry, Murphy was criticized in 1977 for receiving nearly \$10,000 from industry officials at a fundraiser while his committee was holding hearings on cargo preference legislation that was crucial to the industry.

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— Washington
— STAR
— PG A-6

Date: 2-4-80
Edition:

Title:

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The same year, Murphy confirmed that he had arranged a meeting in 1973 between the Interstate Commerce Commission and Thomas Gambino, son of reputed New York City mafia boss Carlo Gambino. The younger Gambino was having difficulty obtaining ICC authorization for his trucking firm. Murphy later appeared before a grand jury on the subject.

In early 1979, it was publicly reported that Murphy was under investigation by the Justice Department for possible tax evasion and failure to register as a foreign agent. The Staten Island Democrat was active on behalf of the Pahlavi Foundation, a Tehran trust fund controlled by the deposed shah of Iran.

Rep. John M. Murtha, D-Pa.

A Marine Corps major who won a Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts in Vietnam, Murtha has in six years become an influential House member with close access to the formal Democratic power structure.

The \$3,200-a-year pay raise that took effect for members of Congress last year owes more to Murtha than to any other individual. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, he saw that pay raise language was included in a legislative appropriations bill last spring.

When that bill was defeated on the House floor, Murtha tried again, attaching a pay raise to an emergency appropriation bill. Along with other members of the House leadership, he lobbied furiously for it in the weeks before floor consideration, and patrolled the aisles the afternoon of the vote, helping to round up the support needed to push the bill through.

In addition to serving on the

Appropriations Committee, Murtha is a member of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, the chamber's ethics committee.

Rep. John W. Jenrette Jr., D-S.C.

John Jenrette came to Congress in 1974 through the support of the emerging black electorate in South Carolina, and he has been a close ally of his state's black community ever since.

A native of Horry County, scene of federal probes in the past, Jenrette came to prominence in 1972 when he wrested the district's Democratic nomination from John McMillan, the aging chairman of the House District of Columbia Committee. He lost the general election that year, but ousted a Republican in 1974, and won re-election comfortably in 1976 and 1978.

Jenrette has been a member of the House Agriculture and Appropriations committees and has worked assiduously for the protection of tobacco, the area's most important commodity. On other issues, he has generally been among the most moderate of the southern House Democrats, more willing than most to support national party goals. In 1979, he supported a welfare reform bill opposed by almost all Democrats from southern states.

Rep. Michael (Ozzie) Myers, D-Pa.
The best-known incident of Ozzie

Myers's three-year congressional career is one he would just as soon forget. He was arrested in January of 1979 and charged with assaulting a security guard and a cashier in an Arlington cocktail lounge.

The arrest took place after a party following Myers' swearing-in for his second congressional term. He was initially charged with assault and battery, but pleaded no contest to one count of disorderly conduct under an arrangement that allowed his record to be cleared of the conviction.

Otherwise, Myers has been a quiet member of the Education and Labor Committee and only an infrequent participant in House floor debate.

A former cargo checker on the Philadelphia docks, Myers rose in South Philadelphia Democratic politics under the regime of Mayor Frank L. Rizzo. When a vacancy developed in the city's congressional delegation in 1976, the party organization chose Myers, and he was easily nominated and elected.

Rep. Raymond F. Lederer, D-Pa.

Like Myers, Lederer made his reputation in Philadelphia politics as an organization Democrat, one who helped Mayor Rizzo when the chips were down.

A former football coach and probation officer in the Philadelphia school system, Lederer served two terms in the Pennsylvania legis-

lature. When Democrat William J. Green left the U.S. House to run for the Senate in 1976, Lederer moved on to Congress.

Lederer also succeeded to Green's place on the Ways and Means Committee, where he has been a consistent liberal Democratic vote. He has worked hard for tariff protection for industries important to his area, and has been an active critic of subsidies to sugar producers.

Rep. Richard Kelly, R-Fla.

The only Republican reported to be under investigation, Kelly has survived serious trouble before.

As a local judge in Florida, Kelly faced impeachment charges based on his treatment of defendants before the bench. But he was never convicted by the state legislature, and won election to the House in 1974.

As a House member, Kelly has been a maverick and a loner, a bitter critic of labor unions and the bureaucracy, who enjoys tearing into the liberal opposition on the House floor. He has been among the chamber's most consistent fiscal conservatives, and this brought him extra attention in 1979 when it was discovered that he had overspent his House expense allowance, forcing him to pay money back to Congress.

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Three Targets of Bribery Investigation



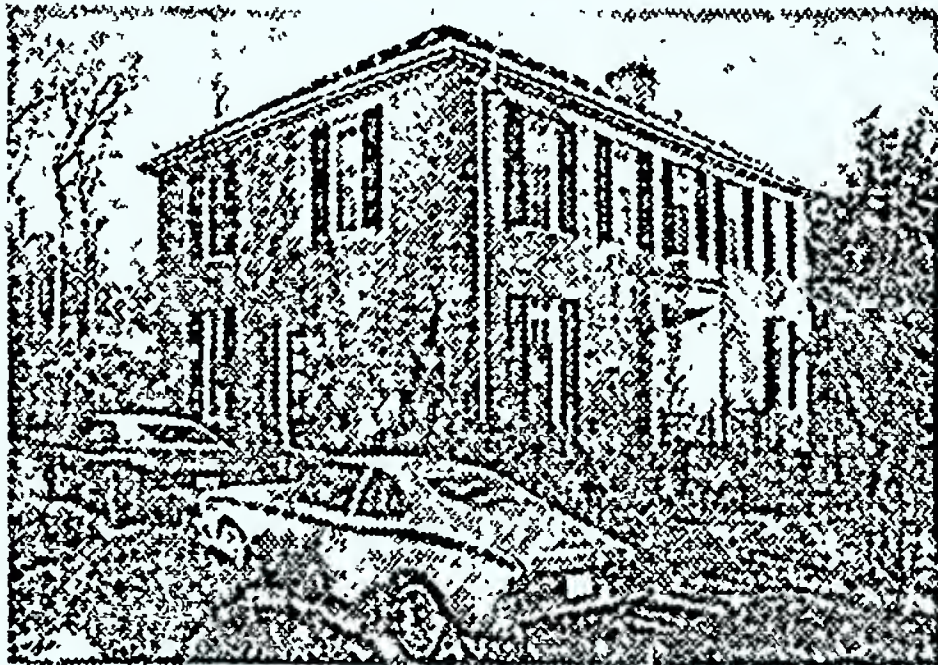
REP. JOHN JENRETTE



MAYOR ANGELO ERRICHETTI



SEN. HARRISON WILLIAMS



Rep. John Jenrette, D-S.C.; Angelo Errichetti, mayor of Camden, N.J., and Sen. Harrison Williams, D-N.J., talk to reporters outside their homes yesterday after news stories said they and other politicians face potential bribery charges following an undercover FBI "sting" operation. The house (left), at 4407 W St. NW, was the center of the operation in the District and was rented to the FBI by an unwitting Washington Post reporter, Lee Lescaze.

—Photos by AP, UPI and Mark Reinstein

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Ethics Panels to Probe 'Sting'



Sen. Larry Pressler, R.S.D., said today he doesn't consider himself a "any kind of hero" for rejecting alleged FBI bribe efforts. "Where have we come to if that's considered heroic?" he said. Sources close to the probe allege Pressler was the only one of some 20 politicians and officials who turned down illegal payments offered by undercover FBI agents.

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— STAR

— Pg A 1

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Hill Leaders Voice Shock, Concern

By Allan Frank
Washington Star Staff Writer

Ethics committees in both houses of Congress today pledged investigations of reports that seven House members and a senator were snared in an FBI "Sting" operation, while congressional leaders voiced their shock and expressed fear for the image of Congress.

The House ethics committee was called into a emergency session to consider the new allegations, while the chairman of the Senate ethics committee announced his intention to investigate the matter.

The House ethics chairman, Rep. Charles E. Bennett, D-Fla., said the panel has "for several months" been investigating allegations about deals to help aliens gain residence in the United States.

He said those allegations involved several congressmen whose names now have come up in the FBI investigation revealed in newspapers over the weekend.

Bennett said his committee would widen its probe, begun as a spinoff of the committee's investigation of alleged illegal payoffs by South Korea to congressmen.

At a news conference this morning, House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill said that he expected the ethics committee investigation to move swiftly and that he would not interfere with it.

O'Neill conceded that the publicity so far creates a new public relations problem for the House. "The institution has been hurt by it. Naturally I feel hurt," he said.

Sen. Howell Heflin, D-Ala., chairman of the Senate ethics committee, said his panel will conduct "a thorough investigation of all allegations" against any senators snared in the FBI's undercover political corruption investigation.

Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., asked how the scandal would affect the public's image of Congress, said: "It doesn't do it any good. I'm very disappointed — I'm sure other members of Congress likewise — discouraged, shocked."

The Justice Department, meanwhile, announced an "intensive

See HOUSE, A-6

House Ethics Panel Called To Look at 'Sting' Claims

Continued From A-1

investigation" will be conducted to find the source of leaks that apparently forced the FBI to cut short the investigation.

Robert M. Smith, a special assistant to Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti, said the probe will be aimed at finding out "whether deliberate disclosures have been made by federal employees" about the existence of the undercover operation, which involved national and local politicians and businessmen here and in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Florida.

The investigation of the leaks to reporters and perhaps to others was triggered by news reports yesterday and late Saturday about the FBI undercover operation, code-named Abscam. The name stands for Arab Scam, an operation in which agents posing as Arab sheiks are said to have paid bribes totaling \$500,000 to \$700,000 to various officials.

After the revelation of the Abscam operation yesterday, one law enforcement source said it is possible a leak — not to a newsman — caused some of those under surveillance to become suspicious.

Assistant Attorney General Philip B. Heymann, head of the Justice Department's criminal division, declined to comment about the reasons for the termination of the FBI operation.

While specifically denying that any of the members of Congress were found to have ties to organized crime, several sources said that disclosure of the operation threatened the safety of the undercover agents and informants.

The news stories also are certain to fuel allegations that the government engaged in improper conduct, possibly prejudicing future court cases, according to attorneys likely to be involved in defending congressmen.

"The Department of Justice will have no comment at all about specific investigations of political corruption or white-collar crime," Smith said today. "The disclosures made by the media are regrettable because they may injury the reputations of innocent people."

"In light of the nature and extent of the purported disclosures, the Justice Department's office of professional responsibility and the criminal division will initiate an intensive investigation to see whether deliberate disclosures have been made by federal employees.

The undercover operation had been under way since mid-1978. It evolved from an investigation by the Brooklyn unit of the Justice Department's Organized Crime Task Force of organized crime involvement in the sale of stolen securities and art. Sources said an informant then led investigators to intermediaries who said they knew some politicians who were willing to help illegal aliens stay in the United States in return for payoffs.

The leading actor in the FBI operation was an agent posing as Sheik Kambir Abdul Rahman, who claimed to be a 40-year-old Lebanese in control of millions of dollars in oil transportation money from the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere.

That agent met many of those who were allegedly videotaped discussing or accepting bribes of as much as \$50,000. Other agents, also posing as sheiks working for Rahman's company, Abdul Enterprises Ltd., are said to have met in various locations with some of the 30 persons said to be under investigation.

Among those named as having been targets of the FBI investigation are:

- Senate Labor Committee Chairman Harrison A. Williams Jr., D-N.J.
- House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee Chairman John M. Murphy, D-N.Y.
- House Administration Committee Chairman Frank Thompson Jr., D-N.J.
- House ethics committee member John P. Murtha Jr., D-Pa.
- Reps. Michael (Ozzie) Myers and Raymond F. Lederer, both Pennsylvania Democrats.
- Rep. John W. Jenrette Jr., D-S.C., and Rep. Richard Kelly, R-Fla.

Government sources stressed that FBI Director William E. Webster and high Justice Department officials had constantly reviewed the FBI operation to make certain that congressmen and others were not being "entrapped" into committing illegal acts.

Government sources also said that with an operation involving as many law enforcement personnel and politicians as this one, it may have been impossible for the government to complete the investigation before news of it was leaked.

Some reporters and middle-level government officials not directly involved in the case had known about it for several weeks before the story broke on the news wires and the networks Saturday.

Grand juries in New York, New Jersey, Washington, Pennsylvania and perhaps Virginia and Florida are expected to be called within the next month to begin hearing from prosecutors about the various illegal acts said to have been committed in those jurisdictions.

Many of the transactions between the undercover agents and the politicians and their intermediaries are said to have been recorded on "hours and hours and hours" of videotapes, some shot surreptitiously in a house at 4407 W Street NW, which is owned by Washington Post reporter Lee Lescaze, who unwittingly rented his home to the FBI after being transferred to a New York assignment.

Government sources said fear that the breaking news stories would compromise the investigation forced the FBI to send dozens of agents out Saturday to interview 30 persons, in-

cluding three Philadelphia city councilmen, the mayor of Camden, N.J., and a member of the New Jersey Casino Control Commission as well as the Capitol Hill figures involved.

The go-between for Lederer, Murphy, Myers and Thompson was a Philadelphia lawyer, Howard L. Criden, The New York Times has reported. Criden, a former Pennsylvania deputy attorney general, reportedly began cooperating with the FBI on Saturday when he was told the men he was meeting with were undercover agents, not rich Arabs.

Through associates of the original, and unnamed, informant, the FBI undercover agents also were introduced to Camden mayor Angelo J. Errichetti, who The New York Times said helped involve Williams.

Errichetti, who yesterday told reporters he is innocent, is said to have offered the sheik help in investing in land in Camden and Atlantic City and in gaining a license for a casino.

The Times said that Errichetti also tried to convince the agents for the phony sheik that they should join with him in purchasing the Atlantic City land, then inflate the price to the sheik and split the profit.

The undercover agents also are said to have had meetings in Florida, New York City and Virginia to arrange for Williams to obtain stock in a titanium mine in exchange for using his power on the Hill to obtain government contracts for the venture. No money is said to have been exchanged between the undercover officers and Williams.

In today's editions, the Times reported that Robert J. Del Tufo, U.S. attorney for New Jersey, recommended that possible prosecution of Williams be stopped for lack of a solid case, but that Civiletti overruled that recommendation.

In a telephone interview last night, Del Tufo told The Washington Star: "Everybody involved in this matter has from time to time furnished various memoranda containing legal analyses and other things to the Justice Department. As far as what the contents of those memoranda are, it is something between myself, the people in the Justice Department and the other prosecutors."

The Times also reported that an Immigration and Naturalization Service inspector, Al Alexandro, was arrested last night in connection with allegedly having accepted a \$2,000 down payment on a \$15,000 bribe from the undercover agents. He is alleged to have told the agents that he could help win residency for a relative of one of the aliens.

Spokesmen for several of those implicated, including Williams, Murphy, Jenrette, and Thompson, yesterday said no bribes had been taken. Through spokesmen or in interviews with reporters, Thompson, Murtha and Jenrette each acknowledged meeting with someone purporting to represent Arab interests. All denied that any illegal acts had occurred.

Murphy issued a statement today in which he said, "I categorically deny any wrongful involvement with the recently disclosed FBI Abscam Operation. I'm not in violation of any federal or local laws. I have not been involved in any money transactions.

A routine background check disclosed to me that these persons were fraudulent," Murphy said.

Murtha told the Greensburg, Pa., Tribune-Review that he had been contacted during Congress' Christmas recess by a man claiming to be a Philadelphia lawyer who said he represented an Arab. Murtha said he was told the Arab had money to invest in his district provided he could be assured of receiving permanent resident status from the INS.

At a Jan. 7 meeting at the house on W Street, Murtha said one of the Arab representatives referred to the need for permanent resident status and said, "It's worth \$50,000." Murtha added, "I assumed the lawyer was going to make \$50,000. . . ."

The congressman said he told FBI agents interviewing him Saturday, "I'm glad as hell you have those videotapes. . . . They didn't offer me any money and I didn't take any."

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Ethics Aide GOP Urge 'Sting' Probe Republican Meeting Assails Democrats On Corruption Issue

By Charles R. Babcock
and George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writers

Republican leaders and the chairman of the House ethics committee called yesterday for congressional investigations of reports that eight members of Congress face potential bribery charges after being snared in an undercover FBI "sting" operation.

More than 60 GOP officials meeting in Easton, Md., approved a resolution calling for the inquiry and criticizing the Democratic congressional leadership for failing to pursue corruption allegations vigorously.

Rep. Charles E. Bennett (D-Fla.), chairman of the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, said in a phone interview that he has asked a Justice Department official to cooperate by handing over some of the evidence uncovered in the FBI's year-and-a-half-long secret operation. Undercover agents posed as Arab sheiks and businessmen, and made videotapes of cash payoffs to some members in New York and Washington.

The Washington Post reported yesterday that the subjects of the investigation include Sen. Harrison A. Williams Jr. (D-N.J.) and Reps. Frank Thompson (D-N.J.), John M. Murphy (D-N.Y.), John W. Jenrette Jr. (D-S.C.), John P. Murtha, Raymond F. Lederer, and Michael Myers, all Pennsylvania Democrats, and Richard Kelly (R-Fla.). Williams, Thompson, Jenrette, Kelly and Murtha have denied the reports. The others could not be reached for comment.

Several state and local officials, including a New Jersey mayor and gambling commission official, are also said to be under investigation.

FBI agents continued yesterday to question others involved in the "sting" operation, according to sources. Grand juries are expected to be empaneled this week to begin hearing evidence—and viewing videotapes—in the case, which is being called the largest Capitol Hill corruption investigation ever.

Federal prosecutors will question witnesses before grand juries in Washington, Philadelphia, Newark and Brooklyn, one source said.

Bennett said that allegations about misconduct by "some of the same members" mentioned in the news accounts already are being checked out by the ethics committee staff. It is known that the committee has been following the progress of federal investigations of Jenrette and Murphy unrelated to the charges arising from the FBI's Arab "sting."

Bennett added that he didn't think the committee would need the videotapes now to conduct its own investigation of the bribery allegations.

FBI and Justice Department officials

See STING, A14, Col. 1

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

— Washington
— Post
— Pg A1

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GOP, Ethics Unit Head Ask 'Sting' Probes

STING, From A1

als continued to refuse to comment officially on the investigation.

But it now seems clear that the undercover agents used several tactics when meeting the members of Congress. The most common was agreeing to exchange cash, usually \$50,000, with a member of his associate in return for help in getting an "Arab client" into the United States, according to sources. Other times, some of the House members acknowledged, they were introduced to men representing

"Arab businessmen" looking for investments.

In one case last fall, Sen. Larry Pressler (R-S.D.) was introduced to some men who suggested they could raise \$50,000 for his presidential race. They also wanted help in getting a "wealthy Arab" into the country. He refused, making him, sources said, the only official on the videotapes who is not now a subject of the investigation.

Some of the congressmen were taped and recorded several times, in hotel rooms, and a northwest Washington home that was rented from a Washington Post reporter who wasn't aware of the "sting" operation.

Murphy, for example, was taped last October at the Hilton Inn at Kennedy Airport in New York with Philadelphia attorney Howard Criden, according to sources, discussing how the "client" of the undercover agents could get into the country.

Murphy allegedly suggested the man should buy a house or a company to make it easier, and at the end of the conversation, a closed briefcase filled with \$50,000 is offered to the congressman. But, according to sources, he said, "Howard will take that."

Just a few weeks ago, Murphy was filmed again, in the house in northwest Washington, the sources said. This time he and Criden brought along a businessman, allegedly for a discussion on how to split up shares of a shipping company the "Arab" might buy.

Murphy, chairman of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, reportedly said he'd be glad to

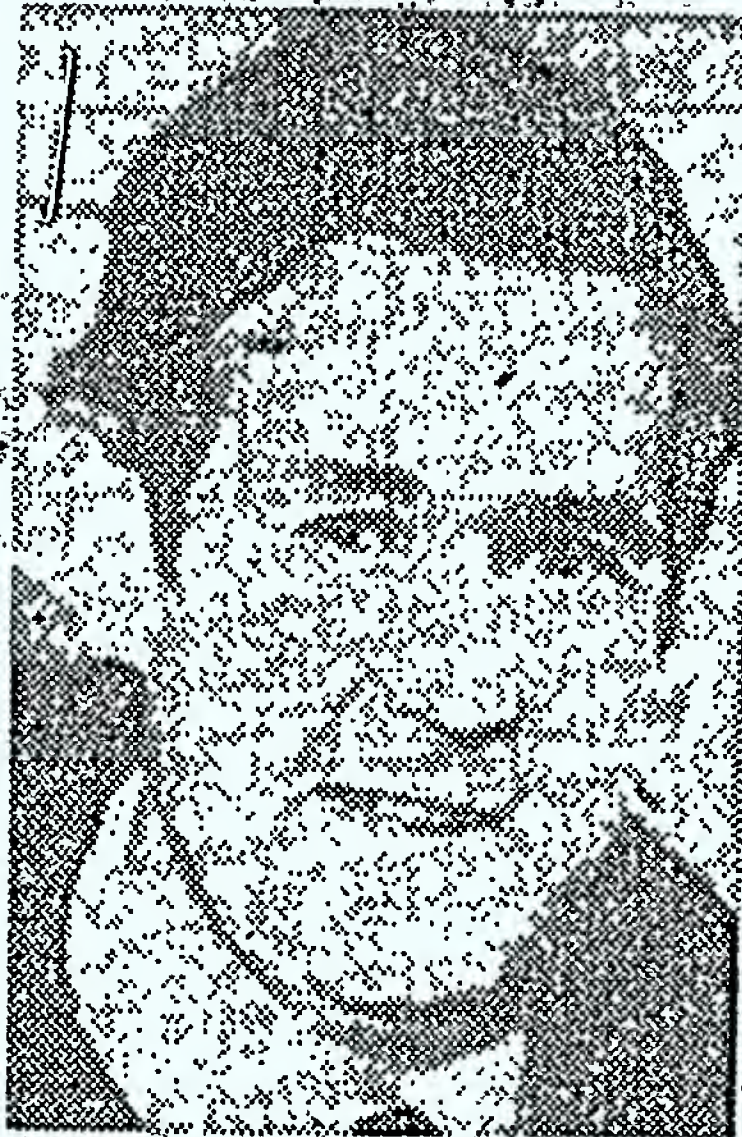
Murtha was brought to the "sting" agents by Murphy, according to sources, and though he took no money at the taped meeting he is alleged to have said he would take the cash and share it with other members.

Murtha could not be reached for direct comment, but gave a detailed account of his version of the incident to the Greensburg, Pa., Tribune-Review.

Murtha said he had been told by FBI agents who visited him at his Johnston, Pa., home Saturday that he could expect to be called before a grand jury regarding meetings he had with purported representatives of a wealthy citizen of the United Arab Emirates.

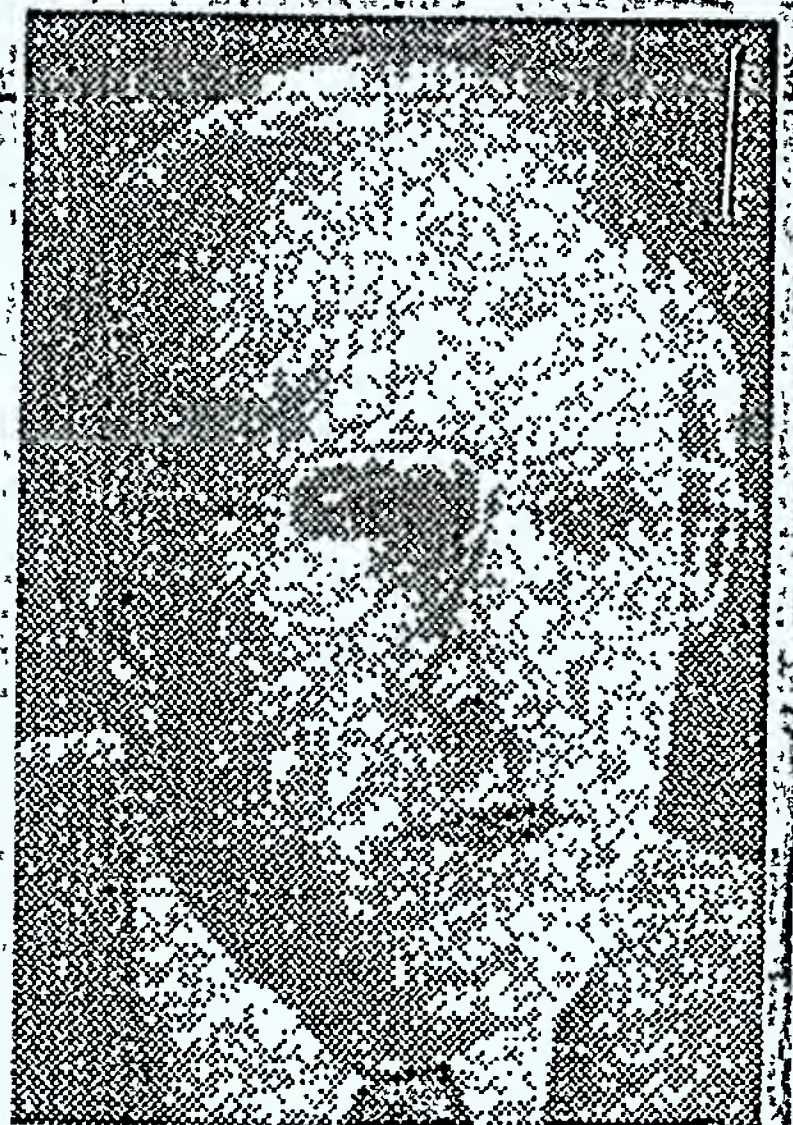
"They didn't offer me any money and I didn't take any," the Tribune-Review quoted Murtha as saying.

According to Murtha, he was con-



REP. JOHN MURTHA

... "I didn't take any" money



REP. RICHARD KELLY

... denies any wrongdoing

tacted during the Christmas recess by someone claiming to be a Philadelphia lawyer with an Arab client who wanted to get into the United States as a permanent resident — and who might make some investments in Murtha's congressional district.

On Jan. 7 or 8, Murtha was taken by the "lawyer" to a Washington, D.C. house for a meeting, presumably videotaped by FBI agents.

Murtha said he agreed to try to find out whether the "Arab" could be admitted to the United States. Murtha said he also told those at the meeting he would look for investment prospects in his district because he was trying to "make sure we didn't lose that."

Murtha said the individuals at the meeting offered to put \$1 million on deposit at a Johnstown bank as evidence of the Arab's purported \$45 million to \$50 million line of credit. He said he was also told "it's worth \$50,000" to get the Arab admitted to the country and work out a business deal.

"I assumed the lawyer was going to make the \$50,000," Murtha said. "Then later, I thought, 'Their lawyer's getting \$50,000 and he's not worth too much because [he] doesn't even know how to get his client into the country.'" Murtha said he told the FBI agents who came to his house Saturday that he was "glad as hell you have those videotapes."

Jenrette is alleged to have accepted \$50,000, passed through an associate, for an immigration bill. One source claimed that Jenrette is heard on a tape to say that he had larceny in his heart and that he would take every dollar he could get his hands on.

Jenrette gave a different version in a prepared statement he issued here yesterday.

He said that "in an effort to assist someone in obtaining financing for a significant project in my district which would have provided 500 jobs, I accompanied this person to a couple of meetings with people I now understand to be FBI undercover agents."

The South Carolina Democrat said his purpose in attending the meetings was to assist in getting the project for his district. "At no time," he declared, "did I engage in any improper or illegal activities."

Jenrette said his attorney has advised him to say nothing further "in view of the fact that the FBI has apparently released a great deal of in-

formation as saying he wants a full airing of the matter before the election." Jenrette continued, "I share his desire. Once the full information regarding this project is released to the public, I am confident it will establish that I have done nothing improper."

Jenrette was at his Washington home yesterday, but an aide said he would not come to the phone. An aide said he didn't know why Jenrette did not deal in his statement with the allegation that the congressman had received \$50,000 as a down payment to introduce a bill keeping one of the "sheiks" in the United States.

Jenrette's wife told a television reporter, "Maybe they [the FBI] gave him so much to drink that he said 'oh yeah' to everything they asked. But he didn't come home with the \$50,000."

Kelly said in a statement last night that he had been in touch with the Justice Department and "am confident I have not been involved in any criminal activity." He declined to comment further.

Sources said Kelly is shown on videotape stuffing cash from the FBI operation into his trousers and jacket pockets.

The sources said they are confident the tapes will withstand court challenges. Williams is shown on one tape talking actively, without urging, from the undercover agents, about a titanium mine stock deal, the sources said.

When the FBI agents discuss giving the senator stock — phony stock — in the mine, he allegedly says something like "don't put my name on it" and the stock certificates are made out instead to a Williams associate, the sources said.

George Koelzer, Williams' attorney, declined to comment on the charges yesterday.

Thompson, who has denied reports he agreed to trade favors for cash, was described last night by one source as the House member who struggled with an associate over a briefcase containing \$50,000.

Defense attorneys seem sure to try to use entrapment as a defense in any cases that result in indictments and go to trial. But that defense worked only once in all the trials from a fa-

mous "sting" case in Washington a few years ago.

In that case, an assistant U.S. attorney, Donald Robinson, was acquitted after his lawyers showed that the undercover agents had called him repeatedly, trying to get him to come down to the undercover operation.

Sources said that in the current congressional "sting" case, middlemen and associates of the members — not the undercover agents — brought the congressmen to the "sting."

The FBI shut down the undercover operation and conducted hurried interviews Saturday when word of the "sting" began to leak out to several news organizations.

FBI Director Webster personally called off the investigation, partly because, as one source put it, "somebody let the cat out of the bag some time ago," but primarily because he felt there was no point in stringing it out any more simply to catch someone else in the web.

"Hell, that was the end of it," this source said. "He called it off to the extent of saying, 'I don't see anything else. There's always going to be someone who says, 'Give me another week or give me another month,' but how long do you go? There may be some people who think that you wait long enough, you'll get everyone, but to say that everyone has his price is just too pessimistic."

The "sting" operation began as a general property crimes investigation with an informer who had helped in the recovery of some valuable paintings that had been missing for years. After being asked what else he knew that might be of interest, the individual offered information that led to Operation ABSCAM, for Arab scam. The FBI, it was understood, decided to make "wealthy Arabs" as the lure because that lent plausibility to the approaches that were made.

The FBI agents assigned to the operation were made to look "as authentic as possible," reportedly to the extent of wearing traditional Middle Eastern garb.

Sources said the FBI had been afraid for months that the inquiry would leak out into the press at any moment. As long ago as last fall, it was said, Women's Wear Daily asked about "one name" involved in the investigation and then a local New Jersey paper called about another, but nothing ever came of their queries. The bureau decided to go ahead and "tie up the loose ends." Newsday and NBC began asking more detailed questions a few days ago.

Pretrial publicity could be a prob-

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

FBI 'Sting' Snares Several in Congress

By Charles R. Babcock
Washington Post Staff Writer

An FBI undercover "sting" operation set up to catch organized crime figures selling stolen securities and art objects, has snared several members of Congress on potential bribery charges, according to sources.

The sources said the FBI has videotapes of several transactions in which different members of Congress discuss their willingness to help FBI undercover agents with legislation or other favors. The FBI agents were posing as representatives of Arab businessmen.

The investigation is described as the largest ever involving members of Congress. More than \$400,000 in cash has been paid out to some congressmen and some state officials over the past year, sources said.

N.J. and a New Jersey state gambling official, according to sources.

The political fallout from the investigation could be immense because of the number of members of Congress involved, including three committee chairmen, and the apparent quality of the evidence.

It seems certain the case will provide new energy to the dormant debate about congressional ethics. The last major scandal involving Congress was the South Korean influence-buying scheme, which produced major congressional hearings but few criminal charges and little disciplinary action against House members by their peers.

In one case, for example, a videotape shows Murphy discussing with the undercover agents how to help their "Arab" clients get permanent residency if they entered the

United States, the sources said. A briefcase containing \$50,000 was handed to a Murphy associate after the discussion, they added.

One of the videotaped transactions was as recent as mid-January, sources said. Sources said the subjects of the investigation include Sen. Harrison A. Williams Jr. (D-N.J.), chairman of the Senate Labor Committee; Reps. John M. Murphy (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee; Frank Thompson (D-N.J.), chairman of the House Administration Committee; John Murtha (D-Pa.), a member of the House Ethics Committee; John W. Bennette Jr. (D-S.C.); and Richard Kelly (R-Fla.).

The Long Island paper Newsday reported last night that Reps. Michael Myers and Raymond F. Lederer, both Pennsylvania Democrats, also are subjects of the inquiry.

Several state and local officials in New Jersey and Pennsylvania are also said to be involved. These include the mayor of Camden,

Murphy said through an aide last night that he had "no idea of any [bribery] allegations."

The Camden mayor, Angelo J. Errichetti, was a key figure early in the investigation, sources said.

He offered help in getting an Atlantic City casino license for the "Arab." A state gambling commission official was later paid \$100,000, the sources added.

An even more central figure was Howard Criden, a Philadelphia lawyer who was the go-between in transactions involving Reps. Murphy, Thompson, Lederer and Myers, sources said.

Criden, a former assistant district attorney, allegedly told the undercover agents he could

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FBI 'Sting' Operation Snare Several Members of Congress

introduce them to members of Congress who would help their "Arab" client for cash.

Sources said Criden was questioned by FBI agents yesterday and began to cooperate, opening the door to confronting the four House members with whom he dealt.

In each case, Criden or the member is alleged to have accepted about \$50,000 in cash in return for promises the help the "Arab oil shiek" with any problems he might have entering the United States or settling here.

Jenrette of South Carolina also reportedly was recorded as talking about accepting \$50,000 for an immigration bill, and the money was later picked up by an associate, sources said.

Sen. Williams was implicated when he agreed to help in obtaining military contracts.

See PROBE, A2, Col. 1

PROBE, From A1

for a titanium mine for which he received stock, the sources said.

Sources cautioned that indictments might not result from all the cases.

Thompson said last night that he was questioned by the FBI yesterday, and acknowledged months ago talking to two men in Washington who said they represented an investor with a large amount of money. Criden made the introductions, he said.

Thompson emphatically denied ever taking money for help with legislation. He said he did suggest the names of some New Jersey banks in his district as possible places to invest the money.

Williams, in a statement issued by his office, said, "Nobody from the Department of Justice has talked to me at all about this. In fact, not one soul has talked to me. Honestly, I can say I don't have any comment on this."

The other members of Congress under investigation could not be reached for comment.

A focal point of the investigation was a large house in northwest Washington where the undercover agents entertained some of their congressional guests.

NBC TV last night showed film it took of the house where the FBI filmed members. Reporter Brian Ross noted that the lights in the house were unusually bright to accommodate the secret FBI videotaping equipment.

More than 100 FBI agents were involved yesterday in trying to reach the members of Congress in the case because word

said.

Sources gave this account of the case: the investigation began in the summer of 1978 when FBI agents set up a "sting" operation in the hope of luring organized crime members to sell stolen government securities and other valuables, starting on Long Island. That investigation, too, has been highly successful, though it has not been publicized yet.

The undercover agents solicited business by letting the underworld sources know they represented "Arab businessmen" with millions of dollars to "invest." The FBI calls the operation **ABSCAM**—for Arab scam.

By last fall, associates of some of the members of Congress made contact with the "sting" operation and allegedly began arranging meetings, in Washington and New York, between the undercover agents and the federal officials.

In one videotaped transaction, a member of Congress and his companion are shown fighting over a briefcase full of cash as they leave the room.

On another occasion, another member of

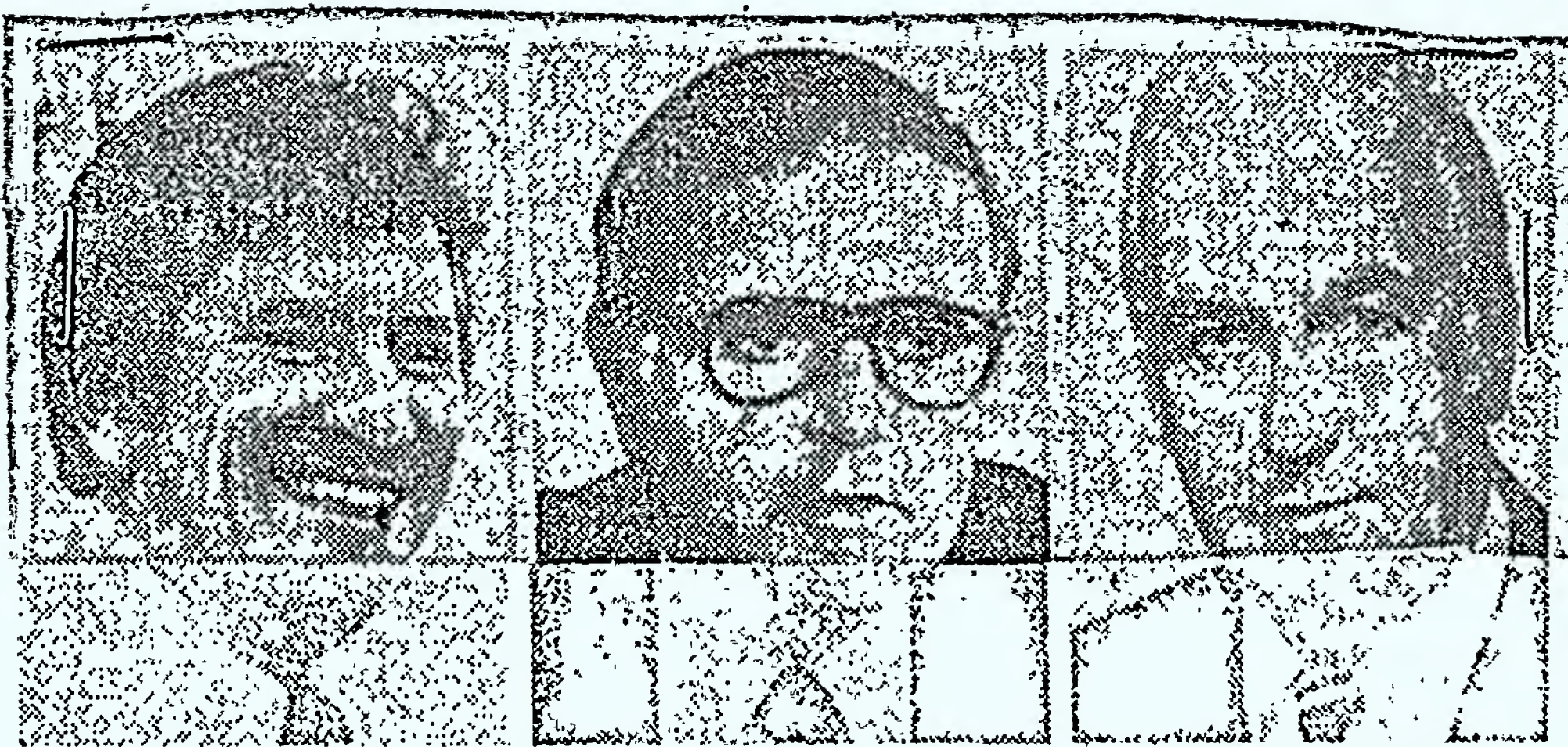
Congress flatly refused to take part in the discussion when it turned to money-for-legislation and stalked out of the room.

One source who has viewed some of the tapes said he was "sickened" by the sight of members of Congress nodding in agreement and saying "no problem" when the undercover agents mentioned giving them money for legislative favors.

In a copyrighted story by its Washington bureau chief, Anthony Marro, Newsday reported that in one transaction caught on videotape, a member of Congress is seen stuffing greenbacks into his trouser and jacket pockets.

To establish their "covers" as representatives of "rich Arabs," the FBI undercover agents were provided with a large yacht, a condominium at an ocean resort, the house here, and private planes in addition to the hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash, Newsday said.

The investigation is being coordinated from New York by Thomas Puccio, head of the



REP. JOHN W. JENRETTE JR.

REP. JOHN M. MURPHY

REP. FRANK THOMPSON



SEN. HARRISON WILLIAMS

REP. MICHAEL MYERS

REP. RAYMOND F. LEDERER

Associated Press Photo

Justice Department's organized crime strike force in Brooklyn, according to sources. Other prosecutors in New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Florida also are working on the case.

Sources said that middlemen, who claimed they could influence state and federal officials, were attracted to the "sting" when they heard of the millions in Arab money.

Thompson said the FBI agents who questioned him yesterday asked him about his association with the attorney, whom he described as "a constituent, as far as I know, a reputable person."

He said he met with the lawyer and two men—who introduced themselves as Weinstein or Weintraub and DeVito—last October at the Foxhall Road area home. The two men, according to Thompson, said they had "some

Thompson added that the FBI agents who interviewed him yesterday implied he was under suspicion and left him with the impression he might have been recorded at the meeting.

No one at the Justice Department would make any official comment on the investigation yesterday, but some officials said they were concerned that future defendants in the case would complain about the publicity.

It also is clear, they said, that any defendants would try to say they were entrapped by the undercover agents.

Sources said they were startled by the increasing number of members of Congress who became involved in the investigation as it continued. When word of the "Arab" money circulated, "it was like drawing sharks to blood in the water," one source said.

Some powerful and prominent men in Congress are among those said to be involved in the investigation.

Sen. Williams, 60, a Democrat of Bedminster, N.J., was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 1958 after spending five years in the House. With his 21 years of seniority, his strong labor backing, his reputation as a leading liberal, he has become a power baron.

He is chairman of the Labor and Human Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over labor law, education and the arts and many of the health and welfare programs that make up the greatest focus of attention for organized labor and liberal groups nationwide.

Since there is no separate subcommittee for labor law matters, Williams as full committee chairman is in effect chairman for labor law, which the full committee handles by itself.

Williams is second-ranking Democrat on the Senate Banking Committee and chairman of the housing and urban affairs subcommittee with enormous influence over the housing

industry, the cities and housing for the poor.

Williams' House colleague from New Jersey, Thompson, 61, a Democrat from Trenton, was first elected to Congress in 1954. As second-ranking Democrat on the House Education and Labor Committee and chairman of its labor-management relations subcommittee, he has had the same power over labor unions, the same pro-labor and liberal records on labor matters and most other domestic legislation as Williams has in the Senate. Together, the two men are the dominant Democrats on each side of Capitol Hill on labor matters.

Thompson, however, is also chairman of the House Administration Committee, a minor-sounding but extremely influential unit which has some of the same housekeeping functions as Senate Rules. Thompson's committee helped write the campaign funding laws and restrictions in the past. Many of the

Murphy has been chairman of the Merchant Marine Committee since 1976.

The 53-year-old representative from Staten Island is a West Point graduate who was a staunch supporter of former strongmen Park Chung Hee of South Korea, the shah of Iran and Anastasio Somoza of Nicaragua.

Jenrette, 43, from North Myrtle Beach, was elected in 1974 to the House seat from the 6th District of South Carolina. He has won a reputation as a flamboyant personality. Two years ago, the press reported he held a fund-raiser at his home here, and for \$100 a person, gave his guests all the homemade grape wine, liquor and "chicken bog" they could down, raising \$20,000. Jenrette is a member of the House Appropriations Committee.

Murtha, 47, was elected in 1974 in a special election to fill a seat left vacant by the death of an incumbent. He is a member of the Appropriations and Ethics committees. Murtha was one of those named to probe phantom House votes last year. Murtha comes from Johnstown, Pa., was a Marine in Vietnam, car wash owner and rated high in voting record compilations put together by organized labor.

Kelly, 55, of Zephyrhills, Fla., was first elected in 1974 and is a member of the Agriculture and Banking committees. Last year it was reported that while he had made a point in his career of attacking the big spenders in government, he himself had run \$11,500 over his office allowance for 1978.

In 1976, he spearheaded an effort to get strikers disqualified from the food stamp program unless they were on it before a strike started. Disney World is in his district. In 1978 his labor rating was zero, his Americans for Democratic Action rating 5 percent, his Americans for Constitutional Action 100 percent.

Lederer, 41, from Philadelphia's Third District, was elected in 1976. He comes from a

family long active in city politics. His older brother is a judge, and another brother was once chief of detectives. Lederer, a member of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, was once reported to have ambitions to become chairman of the Democratic committee of the city but his name disappeared from the contenders.

Michael (Ozzie) Myers, 36, was elected in 1976 as Democratic congressman from Philadelphia's First District. Myers, a former longshoreman, pleaded no-contest to one charge of disorderly conduct last April 10 after originally having been charged with assault and battery for allegedly participating in a brawl in a rooftop bar in an Arlington, Va., motel. Myers denied there was any punching and said "we were just doing a little partying. I'm a gentle guy." Myers, who is on the Education and Labor and Merchant Marine Com-

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Page 14 ~ Duplicate
Page 15 ~ Duplicate
Page 16 ~ Duplicate
Page 17 ~ Duplicate
Page 18 ~ Duplicate
Page 19 ~ Duplicate
Page 20 ~ Duplicate
Page 21 ~ Duplicate
Page 22 ~ Duplicate
Page 23 ~ Duplicate
Page 24 ~ Duplicate
Page 25 ~ Duplicate
Page 26 ~ Duplicate
Page 27 ~ Duplicate
Page 28 ~ Duplicate
Page 29 ~ Duplicate
Page 30 ~ Duplicate
Page 31 ~ Duplicate
Page 32 ~ Duplicate
Page 33 ~ Duplicate
Page 34 ~ Duplicate
Page 35 ~ Duplicate